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## MEETING CUSTOMER EXPECTATIONS: CAN PUBLIC SAFETY BE ASSURED IN AN "URBAN PROXIMATE" FOREST ?

Region 6, Mount Baker-Snoqualmie  
National Forest, Skykomish Ranger District

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Can Public Safety Be Assured in an  
"Urban Proximate" Forest Environment**

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**TITLE:** Meeting Customer Expectations: Can Public Safety be assured in an "urban proximate" forest ?

**ABSTRACT:** The purpose of this project was to describe and document law enforcement and visitor safety challenges found in an urban national forest setting. Alternative methods for reducing, preventing and/or mitigating deprecative behavior were investigated. Roles and responsibilities of the users and land managers were explored. Public safety issues and associated law enforcement challenges are increasing on the Mount Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest. Substantiating this increase is difficult due to insufficient records and inadequate law enforcement coverage on the forest. Results suggest that effective management strategies will require integrated approaches that focus on management understanding and commitment; prevention; relationship building, community involvement; and enforcement.

**KEYWORDS:** Urban Forest, Public Safety, Customer Expectations, User Involvement, Deprecative behavior, Management Strategies.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**TITLE:** Meeting Customer Expectations: Can Public Safety Be Assured in an "Urban Proximate" Forest ?

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**SUMMARY:** National Forest visitors expect the forest environment to be a "safe" environment: an environment relatively free from the stresses and problems of the cities. Typically, the forested, rural environment was a place where visitors could "get away from it all." Increasing recreational pressures on forests adjoining expanding urban centers have resulted in changed environments on those forests. Getting away from it all is not always possible on an urban forest where several million potential visitors live within an hours drive of the forest. Increased use on urban forests have resulted in greater levels of crime, vandalism, theft, garbage dumping, substance abuse, reckless driving and other acts of deprecative behavior. In turn, these deprecative acts affect visitor use, safety and enjoyment of the national forests.

The Mount Baker-Snoqualmie (MBS) National Forest has rapidly evolved into an urban influenced, amenity focused forest. Increased use has resulted in resource and public safety challenges. Determining the scope and extent of criminal and/or deprecative behavior on the forest was difficult due to incomplete records, poor law enforcement coverage and the fact that most deprecative acts go unreported. Trends in terms of numbers of incidents being reported are apparent. They can be accounted for in part through improved law enforcement coverage beginning in fiscal year 1989.

Public safety related issues account for 50 percent of the reported incidents. This trend can be expected to continue with increased visitor use.

Results of this study indicate that greater emphasis is needed in several areas in order to adequately address these public safety issues. Management and employee understanding and commitment as to the scope of the existing and potential problems are needed. Prevention along with relationship building/community involvement and enforcement will be required components of an effective management strategy.

## **Recommendations:**

The Mount Baker-Snoqualmie N.F. should develop law enforcement program goals and objectives that are integrated within overall forest program of work.

Emphasis and expansion of coop law enforcement program is needed.

Ensure law enforcement officers are well trained and training is kept current. Law enforcement selection should be based on interest, communication skills and potentials.

Provide employee training and indoctrination regarding public contacts, public safety and law enforcement roles/responsibilities.

Increase LE/FS uniform visibility and surveillance, especially during peak periods.

Work toward a law enforcement staffing that is commensurate with public use. Emphasize high visibility and public service.

Use media and environmental education to inform public about effects of depreciative behavior, human rights and resource impacts. Publicize law enforcement outcomes where depreciative behavior occurs.

Use controlled access in high use and known problem areas as a prevention technique.

Identify key user groups in the discussion of user expectations, concerns and public safety issues and solutions.

Apply law enforcement in a fair and consistent fashion.

Work with th courts to ensure sentence fits the crime and to educate the courts regarding consequences and complexities of issues related to depreciative behavior and public safety.

Improve annual law enforcement reporting. Include analysis of trends, identifications of methods used that effectively manage depreciative behavior. Work with cooperating agencies to improve consistency and accuracy of county reports.

Keep closure orders up to date. Provide signage and rationale for restrictions.

Group useages (i.e. trailheads and campgrounds) to eliminate isolation problems.

Review the design of facilities to reduce opportunities for vandalism and other depreciative behaviors.

Clean up graffiti and repair vandalized facilities immediately.

Reduced budgets, increased costs and increased public pressures will dictate the need for effective strategies that protect resources and people while at the same time protect the recreational value of these lands.

## **Issues Warranting Further Review and Study**

During the conduct of this study a number of issues related to public safety and law enforcement emerged. The following issues while falling outside the scope of this study were deemed important enough by those participating in the study to suggest further review and analysis (see Appendix E for a more detailed discussion):

Law enforcement staffing and organization. Should Level II enforcement authority be rescinded?

Development of Uniform Regulations across jurisdictional lines. Will this lead to improved understanding and compliance and facilitate enforcement?

Local enforcement authorization for Forest and County and State LEO's. Authorization will improve responsiveness, increase efficiency and improve public safety on the forest. What are the strengths, weaknesses and the legal and political implications of this suggestion?

Improved LEMARS and Local County law enforcement records is needed. Methods to develop improved reporting and retrieving and analysis of records is needed.

## INTRODUCTION

**STATEMENT OF PURPOSE:** The goals of this project are to identify and document law enforcement challenges found in an urban national forest setting and to develop an action plan to help resolve them. Alternative methods that have been or could be employed to reduce, prevent or mitigate illegal and/or undesirable activities are investigated. Identification and discussion of the roles and responsibilities of public land managers and forest user groups are also explored.

The need for this analysis is based on the premise that:

Visitors to the National Forests expect the forest environment to be a "safe" environment: that is, an environment relatively free from the law enforcement hassles/problems more common to the cities.

and

While recognizing the Forest Service can not guarantee a totally safe forest environment, it has an obligation to do whatever is necessary to work toward actively promoting and managing for a forest environment free of crime and/or deprecative behavior.

Law enforcement challenges include all illegal or undesirable activities that would detrimentally affect public safety and/or the quality of the recreational experience.

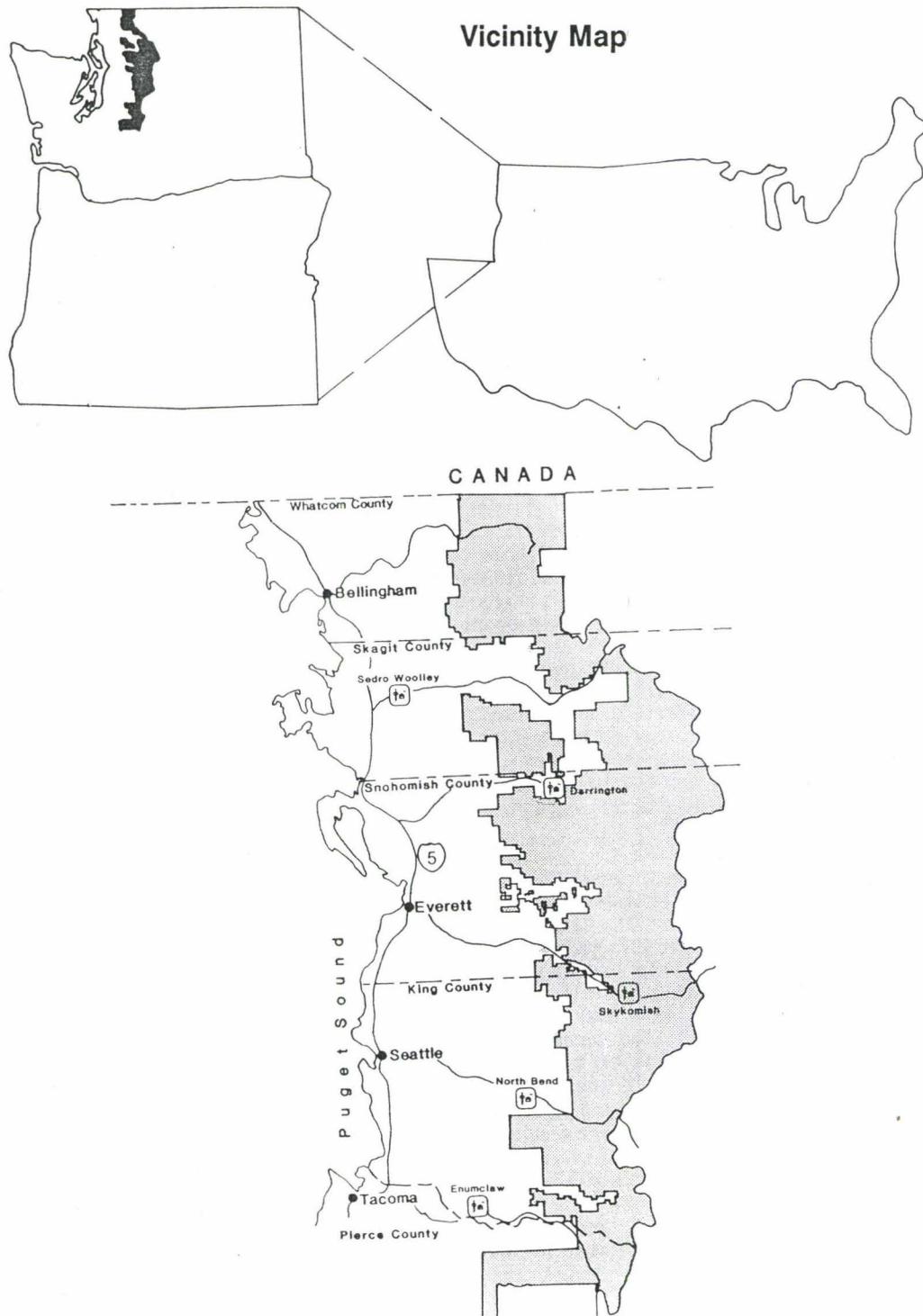
The problem, while complex and many faceted, is manageable provided management understands the scope of the existing and potential problems and is committed to working with the public to resolve them.

**THE SETTING:** The Mount Baker Snoqualmie (MBS) National Forest is located in northwestern Washington, along the west slopes of the Cascade Mountains. It contains over 1.7 million acres, stretching from the Canadian border to Mount Rainier National Park. The Forest falls within five counties that include a population of more than 2.5 million people, over 56 percent of the state's population. The Vancouver, British Columbia metropolitan area just north of the Forest has an additional 3 million people.

The Forest has 36 developed campgrounds, 8 primitive campgrounds, over 1400 miles of trails, seven alpine skiing areas and eight Wilderness areas. The Forest is accessible via all major highways and many secondary state and county roads. This accessibility and diversity of recreation opportunities found on the MBS attracts over 14 million visitors annually including 1.2 million skiers and other winter recreationists.

Recreation is a four season activity on the MBS. Heaviest use is seen during the summer but there have been increases in use during all seasons, especially day use, commensurate with the increase in population within the region.

### Mount Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest Vicinity Map



**THE URBAN PROXIMATE FOREST:** The "urban proximate" national forest as defined herein is any forest located within an hour's drive of a population center with at least one million people. Currently, there are 13 National Forests that qualify as "urban proximate" forests. The Mount Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest easily meets this definition in that more than 5.5 million people live within one to three hours drive of the Forest. In this paper the terms urban proximate and urban forest are used interchangeably.

The urban proximate forest shares characteristics of and experiences activity levels similar to urban parks. Urban proximate forests receive large numbers of culturally diverse and non-traditional visitors, visitors who may share different expectations regarding group behavior, acceptable group size and/or definitions of depreciative behavior. This diversity and increased traditional and non-traditional use of the forest often results in user conflicts and resource impacts. These conflicts and impacts, while manageable for the most part, have created new and potentially more dangerous law enforcement and public safety challenges. In turn, these challenges can affect user enjoyment of the national forest.

The urban forest setting at one time was limited to those forests adjacent to the largest metropolitan areas. As this country's urban population grows other traditionally rural National Forests will be increasingly affected. This change from the rural to an urban influenced forest has significant implications to forest managers. Implications in terms of outdated/overused facilities, vandalism, user conflicts, sanitation problems, trash removal, traffic control and parking. In general, people management concerns will rival resource impact concerns.

## IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY

The MBS Land and Resource Management Plan (LRMP) requires the Forest to do as much as possible to "provide a broad spectrum of recreation opportunities and experiences" (**MBS LRMP, 4-84**). The forest dispersed settings will be "managed to protect resource values, provide a quality experience and provide for public health and safety" (**MBS LRMP, 4-84**). In addition, our guiding principles speak to the need to adapt plans and programs to meet human needs while benefiting communities and natural resources. Thus for the MBS, the issues of managing the public resources while providing a quality recreation experience is of paramount importance.

The MBS has rapidly evolved into an urban influenced, amenity focused forest. This emphasis requires the forest to evaluate its role and responsibilities in response to the need to protect resources and facilities while safeguarding public health and safety. The presence of depreciative behavior, vandalism, theft and other lawless acts make these goals difficult to achieve.

The problems experienced in other urban forest settings can be expected to spread to new areas and forests as urban populations grow and urban areas encroach previously remote wildland settings. The MBS has an opportunity to learn from the experiences of other "urban

"forests" with respect to preventing/mitigating/reducing depreciative acts. Reductions in budgets along with the increase in total number and diversity of visitors will dictate a proactive and user supported management approach.

## STATEMENT OF METHOD

The objectives of this study are to:

- (1) Define "urban" National Forest in terms of characteristics that make these forests different from rural forests.
- (2) Conduct literature review regarding public safety, depreciative behavior and visitor impacts to develop an understanding of causes and possible solutions.
- (3) Document type, extent and location (where possible) of illegal or undesirable activities on the Mount Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest and on other "urban" forests.
- (4) Identify methods employed on other forests and/or urban forest settings that have been used to prevent, reduce or mitigate illegal and undesirable acts or behavior.
- (5) Identify characteristics of successful urban recreation programs in terms of reductions in depreciative behavior.
- (6) Develop action plan alternatives for the Mount Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest, evaluate and make management recommendations.

This project is divided into three distinct areas of data gathering. First, a literature search regarding depreciative behavior and related public safety issues was undertaken. Keywords included: recreation, urban, rural, parks, forests, depreciative behavior, crime and public safety.

The second data layer was constructed using information collected from the Forest Service LEMARS (Law Enforcement Management Activity Report Summary) reporting system. This information was used to identify the type and numbers of reported incidents on the MBS and to identify trends. Additional law enforcement information was solicited from King, Whatcom and Snohomish county law enforcement agencies to identify type and extent of unlawful activities and/or depreciative behavior reported or responded to by those agencies.

The third area of investigation involved contacting other agency personnel with work experience on urban forests. Included in this group (**listed in Appendix A**) are law enforcement personnel, recreation managers, recreation research personnel and forest line

and staff officers. These interviews were conducted with using a series of short questions (**See appendix D for list of questions**) relating to law enforcement challenges, staffing and strategies/solutions being implemented in their areas. The intent was to identify the scope and extent of the law enforcement challenge on their units or within the agency; identify methods employed to reduce/mitigate/prevent unlawful activities; and identify potential partners and/or methods used to persuade potential partners to become involved in a prevention program.

Information and knowledge gained from the three investigative areas were used to develop action plan alternatives for the Mount Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### VANDALISM, DEPRECIATIVE BEHAVIOR AND USER PERSPECTIVES

Much has been written about vandalism and deprecative behavior, its potential causes and the cost to the taxpayer. Deprecative behavior as used in this paper includes acts of defacement of facilities, natural features and vegetation; graffiti, rowdyism; litter; intimidation of other users; theft and/or destruction of private property; and other crimes against people or property. **Clark, Hendee, and Campbell (1971)** pointed out that the definition of deprecative behavior will vary between campers and managers, due to different cultural values. While little has been documented with respect to deprecative behavior and its affect on public health and safety much can be inferred or extrapolated from the literature. **Kraus (1973)** found that crime and vandalism affect recreation areas in at least three ways: 1) it discourages public use of the area 2) it adds to the expense of maintaining the recreation area and 3) perpetrators may threaten or intimidate staff.

Flickinger felt that public safety in parks and recreation settings had been ignored by researchers and in fact there have been too few credible studies to draw examples of effective law enforcement or quality public service (**Flickinger, 1976**). In Flickinger's study the majority of visitors interviewed believed that Ohio State Parks were safe places to visit. He did, however, point out that there were no uniform crime records or reporting systems in use at that time and that this lack of hard information may lead the public and recreation managers to erroneous conclusions regarding law enforcement issues and problems. In fact, determining the actual amount of crime within a forest setting is difficult not only due to the lack of a formal reporting procedure but also because of the confusion of visitors regarding who they should report to. The lack of emergency communications in remote settings is another factor behind poor or limited reporting practices. Some law enforcement officials have estimated that these limitations result in an unreported crime level of two to five times that of reported crime.

**Clark, Hendee and Campell (1971b)** conducted a comprehensive study in 1970 in a large well developed national forest campground. The objective of their study was to determine the differences in the level of concern and/or awareness of problem behaviors between campground managers and campers. Campers, for the most part, thought the problems referred to were relatively unimportant while managers felt that problems were much more serious. In the same study Clark and Hendee concluded that. "there is little potential for controlling campground behavior unless the norm of non-involvement can be changed, which does not seem likely in the near future." In an unpublished study **Berry (1987?)** contacted forest visitors to solicit their perceptions of safety within a campground setting. He found that the perception of safety was strongly influenced by one of three factors: the presence of campground hosts, availability of a telephone, and the occasional presence of a uniformed Forest Service employee. In a similar study Fletcher found that 80 percent of the respondents indicated that the occasional presence of a uniformed official made them feel more safe or much more safe (**Fletcher, 1982**).

These studies clearly point out the need to involve users when identifying public safety concerns and potential management strategies and priorities.

### *THE INFLUENCE OF THE FOREST RECREATION SETTING ON VISITOR BEHAVIOR*

Rural and urban residents share similar values and behavior but differ in how they apply their values and behavior in the rural setting (**Jobes, 1992**). Urban visitors feel that different and somewhat more lax set of rules apply in the rural setting (**Jobes, 1992**). An urban visitor may then expect that the forested recreation setting would represent an environment where there are fewer restrictions. Today's urban visitor's skills, needs and expectations are likely to be different than what traditional forest recreation settings provide.

On national forests the majority of recreation use can be categorized as occurring in two types of "managed" settings: developed or dispersed. The developed setting provides for limited facilities and amenities and a sense of security where campground hosts are used or where access is controlled. The developed setting is regulated. The dispersed setting generally does not include facilities, is for the most part not regulated and the forest visitor is "on his own." The significant difference between these two settings may account for differences in visitor behavior and expectations. In a developed or managed environment rules and regulations are the norm, they're reasonably understood, and within limits are adhered to. The exception to this would be where the visitors feel that the rules are illegitimate (inappropriate, ineffective or isolating) they will be ignored (**Christensen and Davis 1984b**).

In the dispersed, relatively unregulated setting, the forest visitor would expect little interference from recreation managers or other recreating publics. This perceived lack of control or interference or contact with other users draws many visitors to this type of setting. The mix of visitors, those looking for less contact and those looking for fewer rules can and does create user conflicts and management challenges.

Accessibility makes dispersed recreation possible but accessibility has also been found to be a key factor behind some forms of degradative behavior including vandalism (**Donnermeyer and Phillips, 1982**). Vandalism and vehicle break-ins occur most often at trailheads either heavily used or inconsistently used. Vehicle break-ins tend to occur at trailheads where there is good accessibility, low chance of being caught and high public familiarity with the trailhead (**Christensen, Istvan and Sharpe, 1992**).

An additional challenge to the recreation manager will be determining what level of concentrated use within the dispersed setting is acceptable both from the resource impact and public safety points of view. A southern California jurist has recently ruled that concentrated use within the dispersed setting is indicative of a defacto developed setting (**personal communication, Tom Spencer, Angeles National Forest**). The significance of this ruling lies in the fact that recreation managers may be held liable for public safety in what was once considered to be a dispersed recreation setting.

## *OTHER CAUSES OF DEPRECIATIVE BEHAVIOR*

**Hadley ( 1971)** identified factors affecting the increase in crime and lawlessness in parks and recreation areas. These factors included the fact that our society is rapidly moving from a rural to an urban centered population; park managers are more oriented toward resource protection rather than public use; and managers with natural resource backgrounds are poorly suited at handling people issues and conflicts. Today's forest managers have diverse backgrounds yet by and large each has a predominant resource focus. Thus, people management issues may not always be easily understood or managed.

**Clark (1971)** felt that there is a lot of conventional wisdom and myth surrounding the "cause" of depreciative behavior and that all campers share responsibility for depreciative behavior. **Clark (1976)** concluded that there is no proven theory and there are many causes. The environment, specific settings and/or opportunities all play a role. Cultural differences may also influence visitor definitions of "proper behavior" and thus visitors may unknowingly be breaking the rules as defined by the managers. **Clark (1976)** felt that understanding these differences would be fundamental to controlling or managing visitor behavior. Clarks studies focused on user behavior in terms of vandalism and destructive acts but not on the indirect impacts of vandalism on public health and safety.

The conclusion of **Flickinger** in 1976 that public safety in the park and recreation setting had not been thoroughly studied appears to hold true in 1993. The literature has, however, proven useful in that options developed to deal with less serious depreciative acts can be used as a foundation for the development of a broader public safety strategy.

## ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

### *THE MOUNT BAKER-SNOQUALMIE SITUATION*

Law enforcement reports which document recorded deprecative acts including violations of State and Federal laws and regulations were used to assess the type and extent of illegal and/or unsafe activities on the MBS. The key reports used were the Federal Law Enforcement Management Activity Report Summaries (LEMARS) and available county police reports.

Early LEMARS reports were limited in scope and detail. One possible source of the problem was that incidents were not always filled out completely or were filled out incorrectly. Often incidents were not reported because of the lack of knowledge or understanding of the need for documentation by the employee witnessing the incident.

County police records were even more sketchy. County police have only recently begun to separate incidents occurring on national forest lands from other county incident responses. This lack of separation makes it difficult to identify the level of on-forest county law enforcement activity.

Another limitation of the data is that it is believed that many deprecative acts go unreported either through visitor confusion on whom to report to or the belief that little can be done. This is especially true with respect to trailhead vandalism where the victims are confused as to who and/or where to report the incident and the importance of incident reporting.

Table 1 identifies public safety related offenses occurring on the MBS during the years 1987 through 1992. The decision to list an offense in table one was based on the potential for the listed offense to directly or indirectly effect public safety. Table 1 was constructed to emphasize two points. First, reported safety related offenses increased during the period 1987 through 1992 as did total reported offenses; and secondly, that for the five year period public safety related offenses represent over one-half of the total reported offenses. As a method of comparison, the Angeles N.F. recorded 18,579 incidents for the 3 year period 1990-1992. Forty percent of the Angeles incidents related to potential public safety issues.

Table 2 displays the numbers of District specific public safety related incidents. Important to note is the timing in the assignment of a full time law enforcement officer on a district and the numbers of reported incidents. It is apparent that a full time law enforcement presence means improved district coverage, more detailed and complete incident reports and a greater number of notices of violations being issued. The trends in table 1 can be accounted for in part on an improved law enforcement presence across the forest beginning in 1989

Table 1.

**Public Safety Related Offenses\***  
**Reported by Fiscal Year**

M B S

<b>Code</b>	<b>Offense</b>	<b>1987</b>	<b>1988</b>	<b>1989</b>	<b>1990</b>	<b>1991</b>	<b>1992</b>
		Number of Incidents					
2613A	Threaten employee				1	2	2
2614A	Engaged in fighting		1		2	12	5
2614B	Offensive communication			2	2	4	
2615A	Ignited substance	7	1		2	5	1
2615C	Causing a fire				1	4	1
2615D	Leaving a fire	3	2	1	37	20	47
2615F	Escape from control			2	5	1	1
2615E	Cutting or damage	28	11	17	56	75	
2616H	Removing timber	12	7	18	28	46	45
2619A	Damaging property	8	18	16	88	64	86
2619B	Removing property	3	7	4	13	19	41
2619G	Damaging arch resource	1	1	99	99		
2619H	Removing arch resource	3			4	3	1
26110D	Discharge firearms	2		1	13	25	57
26110E	Abandon pers property	3	3	1	18	10	23
26110K	Violation of permit		2	1	16	18	13
26111B	Unsanitary condition			2	8	26	21
26111D	Failure to dispose	8	1	1	49	34	75
26111E	Dumping	2	7		16	17	30
26113H	Damaging resources				5	10	15
26113I	State law violation	11			11		34
26114D	Firecrackers	7	3		5		4
26154A	Vehicles prohibited	59	19	3	90		146
26154F	Careless driving	14			23		22
641	Theft	22	59	42	73	51	26
670010	Personal property damage				19		
670011	Personal property stolen				5	76	78
670013	Search & Rescue				1	18	18
670020	Veh acc-highway					13	26
1361	Damage to property	3	2	4	14	15	9

<b>Forest Totals by Year</b>	<b>YEAR</b>					
	<b>1987</b>	<b>1988</b>	<b>1989</b>	<b>1990</b>	<b>1991</b>	<b>1992</b>
<b>All Incidents:</b>	235	278	229	920	1123	1526

Public Safety Related  
incident totals and  
percent of forest  
totals by year:

196/83% 144/52% 212/93% 685/74% 584/52% 787/52%

\* Collected from LEMARS reports

and on increased visitor use of the forest from 1987 through 1992.

As mentioned earlier, review of LEMARS data presents only one part of the law enforcement picture on a national forest. Equally important are the offenses reported or responded to by the local or county police departments. Reviewing local police records will give a manager a more complete picture of the level of illegal and/or deprecative activities occurring on the forest. Table 3 lists 1992 east King County police activity summary. Data from King County was not as detailed as the LEMARS reports and offense specific trends can not be identified. Local police, as is shown by King County data, play an important role both with respect to providing an additional law enforcement presence on the forest but also through their support to forest law enforcement officers.

**TABLE 2**  
**Mount Baker-Snoqualmie N.F.**  
**District Incidents as a Percent**  
**of Total Forest Incidents by Fiscal Year**

DISTRICT	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992
MOUNT BAKER	8	42	19	12	37	44
DARRINGTON	22	30	15	12	19	12
SKYKOMISH	6	19	46*	17	4	5
NORTH BEND	22	3	9	14	4	3
WHITE RIVER	42	6	11	44	40	46
Estimated Forest Recreation USE (RVD's)		5.4MM	5.2MM	5.2MM	6.5MM	6.5MM
						6.2MM

1989 Full Time law enforcement officer assigned to White River RD

1990 Full Time law enforcement officer assigned to Darrington RD

1991 Full Time law enforcement officer assigned to Mt. Baker RD

\*1989 data for Skykomish RD included one violation coded as 99 incidents

N/A= Not Available

TABLE 3.

KING COUNTY POLICE ACTIVITY SUMMARY FOR EAST KING COUNTY  
1992

Assists to Forest Service Officers	52
Case reports taken	33
Misdemeanor Arrests	75
Misdemeanor Warnings	170
Traffic Warnings	31
Traffic Citations	13
Property Recovered	\$51,000
Cars checked at trailheads	7421

Whatcom County police report summaries are listed in Table 4. Documents supplied by Whatcom County listed incidents by township, range, section number and place name where appropriate. Separating incidents by location, specifically those incidents occurring on or immediately adjacent to National Forest lands was difficult at best. Although limited, this information provides another glimpse of the scope and type of criminal activity occurring in the rural, forested environment.

TABLE 4.

WHATCOM COUNTY POLICE INCIDENT REPORT SUMMARIES  
FOR INCIDENTS OCCURRING ON, ADJACENT TO OR WITHIN  
NATIONAL FOREST SYSTEM LANDS

Fiscal year	Total Incidents Reported
1989	102
1990	154
1991	152

(It was difficult to sort 1989 data specific to incidents occurring on National Forest System lands. Actual number of incidents could be higher.)

The Whatcom County documents display an increase in total reported incidents. Whatcom County reported that the most serious public safety related incidents were: driving while intoxicated, illegal/dangerous discharge of firearms, simple assault, theft, vandalism and substance abuse. The increase in incidents is in part related to the increase in visitor activity on the forest. The county officer in charge felt that the following types of incidents were on the increase in the rural, forested setting:

**indiscriminate shooting**  
**illegal camping:** increase in homeless use of forest  
**search and rescue:** increased numbers of inexperienced visitors using backcountry  
**minors in possession**

For Whatcom county the greatest number of incidents appears to be occurring in the Baker Lake area and in the Mt Baker ski area during the winter skiing season.

## **CRIME AND DEPRECIATIVE BEHAVIOR: A VIEW FROM THE FIELD**

An informal survey was conducted on select urban forests to identify public safety related management challenges. These surveys while not conclusive do provide additional evidence that public safety issues on urban forests are real and in fact are growing. The data displayed in Table 5 portrays a pattern of events which are becoming more typical in the urban forest setting. Clackamas County is an urban county that includes a large portion of the Mount Hood National Forest.

**TABLE 5**

**SUMMARY OF REPORTED CRIMES ON NATIONAL FOREST LANDS  
WITHIN CLACKAMAS COUNTY OREGON  
PREPARED BY CLACKAMAS COUNTY SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT**  
(Reporting Period: January through September 1992)

<u>OFFENSE</u>	<u>NUMBER OF INCIDENTS</u>
Assault (all kinds)	16
Rape	3
Robbery	2
Theft (general)	138
Theft lost property	1
Stolen vehicles	7
Criminal mischief	45
Criminal trespass	2
Drug charges (all)	2
DUII arrests	1
Harassment	1
Kidnapping	1
Menacing	4
Minor in possession	160

Incidents reported in table 5 represent 4 percent of the Clackamas County crime totals as reported by the county sheriff's office. Of the reported crimes, 45 percent were substance abuse related. That is, behavioral problems were associated with alcohol or other substance abuse. This association with deprecative behavior and substance abuse has been mentioned by most of the officials contacted during this project.

The list of acts or activities described in Table 6 was assembled using information provided by personnel from the forests or agencies listed. This information reflects the responses to the survey questions listed in appendix D. Table 6 represents the respondents collective view of the problems encountered on their districts or forests. It is included here to highlight the fact that todays forest law enforcement officers are increasingly faced with problems associated with todays social ills. These additional challenges make the law enforcement job more complex and dangerous.

TABLE 6

**Law Enforcement and Recreation Managers View of the Social and Resource Challenges Facing Urban Forests.**

**FOREST**

ISSUE	GIFFORD PINCHOT	MOUNT HOOD	DESCHUTES **	ANGELES	SAN BERNADINO	MBS	WA-DNR
Theft	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Vandalism	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Garbage Dumping	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Homeless		X		X	X	X	
Mental Illness		X					
Car Clouts	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Marijuana Garden	X	X			X		
Haz Mat Dumps	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Stolen Vehicles		X		X	X		
Cults		X	X	X	X		
Illegal Shooting	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Reckless Driving	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Assault	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Trailhead Vandal	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

\*\* Deschutes National Forest does not technically qualify as an urban proximate forest but was included here because of the rapid population increase in that area of Oregon and the increased tourism activity which has resulted in increases in the above noted law enforcement challenges.

While the scope and extent of the above activities vary by forest and region the opinion was clearly expressed that these types of issues/concerns were on the increase. In fact, the problem of vandalism, theft, garbage dumping and other acts has become so severe that the Washington Department of Natural Resources (DNR) recently closed 23,000 acres of State lands.

A new and somewhat different challenge is that of the homeless use of campgrounds and other facilities. Managers on at least three of the forests listed in table six and one additional (Willamette N.F.) have been asked by local agencies to assist by allowing the homeless visitors extended stays in campgrounds. Homeless visitors include all types and social groups. The presence of families is common. On at least one national forest homeless use of campground facilities has been tied to drug trafficking and other criminal acts. This is not to suggest that this will always be the case but managers should be prepared for this event in areas where homelessness is an issue.

Recreation managers and law enforcement personnel emphasize that the lack of qualitative and quantitative data leads managers to provide best guess estimates relating to levels of depreciative behavior on their forest or district. It is agreed that the opportunities for depreciative behavior increase with increasing visitor use on a forest. Even though the percentage of depreciative behavior remains low with respect to the total visitor load it is significant. As an example: if a forest receives 3 million visitors per year and if 1% of those visitors create problems, violate laws or regulations then there could be up to 30,000 potential depreciative acts committed on that forest. A number well beyond the manageable level on most forests or recreation areas.

One forest officer reported the perception that with increased law enforcement staffing other employees had deferred making public contacts where potential rule, regulation or law violations were occurring. This in effect helps to create a climate whereby offenders may feel little risk of being caught. This opinion was expressed by others and it is easy to understand employee reluctance to "get involved" given the uncertainties regarding personal safety in todays work environment.

It was suggested that the Forest Service will need to take a firm hand in dealing with "undesirable" groups as these groups can negatively affect other users and intimidate staff. A firm hand could mean strict enforcement of rules and regulations or it could mean discouraging use of forest facilities by these groups.

Others responded that, in part, an open transportation system creates the environment whereby effective law enforcement is hampered. Uncontrolled access results in large geographic patrol areas which encourages crimes of opportunity by making it less likely that persons engaged in depreciative acts would be caught.

## WHAT'S WORKING IN OTHER AREAS

In the western United States the southern California forests have had the greatest opportunities to develop workable solutions to the dilemma of overuse, resource impacts and depreciative behavior. Both proactive and reactive strategies have been employed with some success in southern California.

An effective strategy for the Angeles National Forest was to control access. Use of gates and/or other measures to control access has greatly reduce the road damage, vandalism, theft and visitor accidents. Use of heavy duty gates was required in most instances to prevent the most determined visitor from driving behind the barrier. Road closures were promulgated and enforced through Code of Federal Regulations. Road closures alone, however, have not been sufficient to deal with all depreciative acts. Other effective means on the Mt Baldy District (**Stikkers, 1981**) included the following:

1. Separate day use from overnight use
2. Use entrance booths to control campground access
3. Use gates to close areas between designated hours
4. Use of campground hosts
5. Use of armed officers in recreation areas during peak hours
6. Use of vandal resistant/proof materials in problem areas.
7. Use of volunteers: resource education, litter patrols, campground maintenance

On the Angeles National Forest culturally and linguistically diverse users have created barriers to effective recreation and law enforcement management. The Angeles experience suggests that concentration on bilingual signing is only a part of the solution. The Angeles N.F. found that many urban users were illiterate and additional means of communication were needed to enhance understanding and acceptance of the rules and regulations. The greatest positive results were obtained through face to face contact with the users.

Unfortunately, most employees on the Angeles did not speak Spanish, the language of one of the largest user groups on the forest.

The solution for the Angeles N.F. was to enter into a partnership with the California Environmental Project group and the Los Angeles Conservation Corps whereby bilingual "eco-teams" would be used to deliver on-site environmental education messages. These eco-teams are composed of young men and women recruited out of south Los Angeles. The cost is shared by the above partners, the USFS share was \$20,000. The first years experience with these teams (1992) resulted in reductions in graffiti, litter and vandalism (**personal communication; Tom Spencer, Angeles N.F.**). The eco-teams are also being used to spread the messages of personal responsibility, safety, resource ethics, fire prevention and resource protection. While not intended to completely eliminate the need for formal law enforcement these teams have influenced visitor behavior to the point whereby only low-keyed law enforcement is required a majority of the time. The additional benefit of the eco-teams is that team members communicate these same messages within their communities. Eco-team members have stayed an average of 6 months and make an estimated 25,000 visitor contacts per member.

On the Mount Hood National Forest a unique partnership is in the works which will focus on the source of the problems as well as the problems themselves. The Mount Hood has found a strong tie between deprecative behavior and substance abuse. This tie has been substantiated by other forest and law enforcement personnel. The Mount Hood approach involves using interest groups such as **Mothers Against Drunk Drivers (MADD)** to reinforce the notions of public health and safety and personal responsibility. The emphasis will be on education and prevention but will include selective intervention by qualified and trained personnel when required. It is hoped that this approach will be more acceptable and effective when dealing with abusive or difficult users. The outcome of this partnership is unknown as the Mount Hood only recently began putting the partnership together. There is, however, a high degree of optimism that this effort will produce more effective and long lasting results.

The San Bernadino National Forest has enlisted volunteers to assist in the patrolling and permit validation in the wilderness. This has effectively reduced the number and extent of wilderness violations and also has worked well to spread the wilderness ethic among user groups.

Other forests have put emphasis on maintaining a greater law enforcement presence during peak periods while at the same time emphasizing the public service aspect of law enforcement. This has worked reasonably well where use is concentrated and where the law enforcement presence is apparent. On urban forests where concentrated use is widespread extra law enforcement is only minimally effective as the law enforcement resources are spread too thin.

## CONCLUSIONS

An increase in the diversity, numbers and expectations of forest visitors is a challenge facing urban forest managers. Increased visitor loads have translated into increased crime and other deprecative acts. Research has not kept pace with the change in use and behavioral patterns within an urban forest environment nor has it adequately addressed the relationships between settings, behavior, expectations and public safety.

Historically, managers have focused on prevention primarily through access control and enforcement with limited success. Recreation managers and law enforcement specialists agree that no one single practice can be expected to be effective under all circumstances. What is needed is active management through an integrated approach. An integrated approach that focuses on prevention through education, intervention, public contact and user involvement as well as law enforcement.

Effective law enforcement programs focus on public service. Periodic reviews of rules/regulations in an effort to simplify them and avoid user confusion is one example of a public service emphasis. Direct and or indirect management of the setting should include an understanding of the social bonding, needs and expectations of the users.

At the forest level there was agreement that effective law enforcement programs have well articulated and management supported goals and objectives. Public safety and law enforcement roles and responsibilities of forest employees are well understood and accepted and public safety and law enforcement issues are routinely considered a part of the land management decision process. Law enforcement is seen as one aspect of every employee's job responsibility and not just delegated to the LEO's. Finally, successful programs have actively solicited user and interest group support and involvement in their public safety programs. Advocacy program support has been solicited with the promise that it too will result in greater public awareness and community policing.

On the Mount Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest urban encroachment and increased use of the forest has resulted in increased crime and greater numbers of deprecative acts. Some of the reported increases can be attributed to improved reporting and greater law enforcement coverage while the remainder can be attributed to greater use of the forest. Problem areas on the forest are well known and problems are often associated with substance abuse. Developed areas are most often the sites of crimes against people and property including theft, vandalism and rowdyism while dispersed sites are more often the sites where dangerous discharge of firearms, illegal dumping, resource thefts and occasional violent crimes are committed. The full scope of the existing and/or potential problems on the MBS could not be determined based on documents examined in this study.

Through discussions with recreation managers and law enforcement officers on the MBS and other urban forests it is clear that public safety issues are a significant and growing management challenge. Meeting the expectations of an ever increasing and diverse public will require improved interpersonal communication and foreign language skills of managers

and employees along with an improved presence during peak use periods. Higher visibility of uniformed officials can and does make a difference from the user's perspective.

It is clear that forest recreation managers cannot guarantee public safety as related to crime and/or depreciative behavior in the urban forest environment given the diversity of users, their expectations and their views of acceptable risks and behaviors. It is equally clear that forest recreation managers will need to proactively involve users and other interest groups to promote the wise and safe use these public recreation lands.

The start point for managers will begin with the examination and review of their roles and responsibilities as they relate to law enforcement and public safety aspects of law enforcement. Focusing on cooperative efforts in the development of workable and public supported management strategies appears to provide the best long-term solutions.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

These recommendations are based on a proactive and integrated management approach to deal with public safety issues on the MBS. These recommendations are intended to be funding independent in that they can be woven into the framework of how business is conducted on the MBS.

Recommended actions fall into the following categories:

Management and employee understanding and commitment

Prevention

Relationship building and community involvement

Enforcement

### **MANAGEMENT UNDERSTANDING AND COMMITMENT**

An effective law enforcement/public safety program for the Mount Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest must include well articulated and understood goals and objectives that are integrated into the overall forest program of work. Law enforcement and public safety must be given high priority status and the related issues must be integrated within the framework of public service.

Continue to emphasize cooperation and coordination with other agency law enforcement representatives. Strive for improved communications and documentation of incidents occurring on or adjacent to national forest system lands to heighten the awareness level of managers and employees.

Training programs for all managers should emphasize developing a full range of options for reducing depreciative behavior including reviewing rules to ensure that they are necessary and not in place merely for administrative convenience.

Employee training programs that indoctrinate full-time and part-time employees in policy, law enforcement, and personal approaches to users with a public service emphasis should be developed.

A law enforcement staffing level commensurate with public use is important. Using these resources to provide high but low-keyed visibility and public service will assist in community relationship building.

## *PREVENTION*

Prevention measures include a wide range of actions and/or activities that could be implemented to better manage the recreation setting while providing quality public service. Prevention measures include:

Group usages, build campsites at remote trailheads to eliminate isolation problems and reduce vandalism potentials.

Separating different types of activities or conflicting uses. Look for opportunities for development of special areas such as controlled shooting zones, group campsites, or off-road vehicle use areas.

Prohibit the public display and consumption of alcoholic beverages in areas where abuse is known to be a commonly occurring problem.

Provide interpretive materials and visitor alerts or notifications of things to be aware of such as vandalism and theft (see appendix B for example of visitor flyer used in Canada).

Use the media in an effort to keep people informed and influence behavior.

Use of signs that explain the rationale behind a restriction or regulation and/or convey positive messages

Increase visibility and surveillance: hosts, concessionaires, presence of uniformed employees to coincide with peak use periods.

Develop environmental education programs that focus on depreciative behavior, human (personal) rights and resource impacts.

Use schools and the media to inform the public about proper behavior and considerate use of natural resources.

Control access in known problem areas or high use areas through permit systems, entrance stations or gates. Consider restricting access during specific hours (after 10 pm).

Use design of facilities to minimize potential for conflicts and vandalism. Clean up graffiti immediately.

## **RELATIONSHIP BUILDING AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT**

Identify key user groups in known problem areas. Identify contacts and involve them in the discussions regarding user expectations and related management and user issues/solutions.

Look for opportunities for community involvement/policing of problem areas including ideas such as the Angeles N.F. "Eco-Teams" and the Mount Hood's partnership with MADD and/or "neighborhood/campground watch" type programs.

Employee contacts with users should be low-keyed, informal and should focus on public service.

Provide rationale for management actions.

Provide complete outdoor recreation information at established recreation areas.

## **ENFORCEMENT**

Law enforcement should be applied in a fair and consistent fashion across the forest and obvious violations should be dealt with.

Trained, skilled and motivated employees should be sought out for law enforcement/public service positions.

Encourage the courts to sentence misdemeanor or nonviolent offenders to community service in the area where offense occurred. Work with the courts to ensure understanding by the magistrate of the scope and complexity of issues involved with deprecative behavior.

Investigate the development of a uniform code of regulations for agencies managing similar recreation settings (Forest Service, National Park Service).

An annual review of program effectiveness as it reflects on public service and safety is needed. More complete reporting and analysis is needed for managers to understand the scope of the problems or issues and to identify trends.

On-forest law enforcement/public service training should be conducted annually. The purpose would be to heighten employee sensitivity and awareness regarding the increased need for public service through public contact. Incident reporting should be emphasized.

Keep closure orders up to date. Provide signage and rationale.

Integrate law enforcement into all employees duties and responsibilities.

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Appendix A.

**Other Government Agency Contacts**

Mike Andrews: Recreation Staff, Estacada Ranger District Mt. Hood National Forest.

John Berry: District Ranger, Clackamas Ranger District, Mount Hood National Forest.

Harriet Christiansen: R6 PNW Range and Experiment Station.

Don Doyle: Recreation Staff Officer, Deschutes National Forest

Carol Hansen: Criminal Investigator, Mt Baker-Snoqualmie N.F.

Ken Harp: LEO, Angeles National Forest.

Jim Hilmar: King County Sheriff-Communications/Records.

Dwight Johnson: Law Enforcement Officer, White River Ranger District, Mount Baker-Snoqualmie National Forests.

Mike Kania: Lands Coordinator, Columbia Gorge National Scenic Area

Jim Kenna: Area Manager Bureau of Land Management, Prineville, OR

Mike Nitsch: Criminal Investigator, Gifford Pinchot National Forest

Terry Skorheim: Recreation Staff Officer, Mt Hood National Forest

Bernie Smith: R6 Recreation: Developed Sites and Special Uses

Hugh Speight: Law Enforcement, R6 Regional Office

Mike Spence: Recreation Staff, Mt Baldy Ranger District, Angeles National Forest

Gail Van Der Bie: Recreation Staff Officer, San Bernadino National Forest.



Royal Canadian Mounted Police      Gendarmerie royale du Canada

## VISITOR ALERT

Recreational Areas Are Vulnerable To Theft and Vandalism

*Please assist in crime prevention by doing the following:*

- If practical, store valuables (e.g. cameras, telescopes, wallets, purses, travellers' cheques, passports, suitcases, etc.) before arriving at the parking lot or campsite.
- Before leaving your vehicle unattended in a parking lot, ensure that all valuables are locked in the trunk. The trunk is the safest place in your vehicle. If your vehicle is a hatch-back type or does not have a trunk, carry as many of your most valuable possessions as possible with you. They are not safe merely locked inside the car.
- Before retiring or leaving your campsite unattended, lock theft-prone items (e.g. coolers, campstoves, lanterns, etc.) in your vehicle or camper. If practical, ask a neighbouring camper to watch your campsite in your absence, and vice versa.
- Never leave valuables unattended on the beach.
- Keep a list of serial numbers or identifiable markings of your valuables with you in the event they are stolen or lost.
- If you witness an act of vandalism or suspicious activity, please contact Park officials or the nearest R.C.M. Police detachment and report your observation (ie. location, type of occurrence, suspect(s), and vehicle description).

*Thank you for your participation*

*HAVE A GOOD HOLIDAY*

Attachment:

"E" CP/CP 104(87-06)

RCMP CHILLIWACK

Canada



Working Together  
To Prevent Crime

Appendix C.

**PUBLIC SAFETY**

**DRAFT ACTION PLAN FOR 1993-1994  
MOUNT BAKER-SNOQUALMIE NATIONAL FOREST**

<u>Recommendation</u>	<u>Action Item</u>	<u>Who/When</u> (To Be Negotiated)
<b>Management Commitment</b>		
1.	Develop vision statement, goals & objectives for LE program On MBS	Ranger/Staff
2.	Investigate methods for expanding cooperative law enforcement agreements to increase LE visibility, enforcement and communications across the forest.	Admin Officer
3.	Devise strategies for reducing, preventing, mitigating depreciative acts and/or effects of same.	Ranger/Staff
4.	Review forest rules/regulations with the intent of eliminating unnecessary or burdensome provisions that do little to positively affect visitor behavior.	Ranger/Staff
5.	Review signing: emphasize positive messages and include rationale for necessary signage.	Ranger/Staff On-going
6.	Conduct forest-wide training that identifies management's expectations regarding employee roles/responsibilities within the LE/public safety program environment.	Ranger/Staff

<u>Recommendation</u>	<u>Action Item</u>	<u>Who/When</u>
<b>Prevention</b>		
1.	Identify key on-forest conflict areas, look for opportunities to separate conflicting uses/activities. Restrict certain activities in areas of high use.	Ranger/Staff On-going
2.	Group uses (i.e. trailheads/campgrounds to eliminate isolation problems.	Ranger/Staff On-going
3.	Use access control where feasible to discourage/prevent deprecative acts in high use areas.	Ranger/Staff On-going
4.	Develop forest user "alerts" to educate warn forest visitors of potential hazards or problems.	LE/PAO
5.	Increase uniformed presence during peak use periods including hosts, concessionaires and law enforcement personnel.	Ranger/Staff On-going
6.	Get media interest in story development of public safety within the urban forest environment (similar to channel 5's loving it to death series.").	PAO

### **Relationship Building and Community Involvement**

1. Use forest survey to identify users expectations regarding public safety. Recreation
2. Identify potential user/interest group partners to develop community policing options in "key" problem areas. Ranger/Staf  
On-going
3. Solicit assistance/involvement of advocacy groups where substance abuse is known to occur. Ranger/Staff  
On-going

<u>Recommendation</u>	<u>Action Item</u>	<u>Who/When</u>
<b>Enforcement</b>		
1.	Obvious violations should be dealt with and community service should be sought for nonviolent offenses	ALL On-going
2.	Identify areas within existing regulations where consistency in application should be encouraged between agencies (FS/NPS).	Ranger/Staff/LE
3.	Develop annual forest LE summary reports that provide analysis of trends, LE needs and management options.	LE On-going
4.	Work with county LE agencies to improve usefulness of county LE reports.	LE
5.	Provide forest-wide LE training that emphasizes public service and incident reporting.	LE/Admin/Personnel

## Appendix D.

### List of Interview Questions

The following questions were used to solicit comments and ideas. Additional questions and responses were generated as a result of these questions.

1. What are some of your most challenging law enforcement and public safety issues confronting your agency?
2. What are you doing to address those challenges?
3. What successes have you had?
4. What is needed to develop effective public safety/law enforcement programs?

Responses to these questions were summarized in the body of this report. Table 6 is a summary of the responses from question 1.

While responses varied there was a general consensus that people management issues are far outweighing resource issues on urban proximate forests.

## Appendix E.

### Issues Warranting Additional Review and Analysis

A number of issues related to law enforcement and public safety were identified during the investigative stage of this project but were not dealt with specifically in the body of the report because these issues fell outside the intended scope of the project. The contributors to this study felt that these "other" issues warranted additional review and analysis since these issues have potential Regional and National significance/implications.

#### **1. Law Enforcement Staffing and Organization.**

There is a considerable difference of opinion regarding the needed level of law enforcement staffing on a forest and what the components of that staffing should be. Specifically, the controversy centers on whether or not there is a role for level II law enforcement on the National Forests. Given the complexity and challenge, shouldn't all LEO's be trained and skilled as a Level IV officer?

What kind of LE qualification(s) mix is acceptable and under what conditions? Are the roles and responsibilities clearly defined and adhered to?

On what basis do you decide what an "optimum" LE organization would or should look like and how can we best finance that organization?

#### **2. Development of Uniform Regulations**

What opportunities exist to develop a common set of regulations that would apply across varied Federal jurisdictions? Rules and regulations governing use of Federal lands differ significantly depending on jurisdictions. One key example is the difference in how Wilderness rules and regulations are applied across National Park System and Forest Service lands.

Development of regulations that have applications across several land ownerships would improve public understanding and acceptance and would facilitate enforcement.

#### **3. Local Enforcement Authorization for Forest Service LEO's**

Law enforcement and public safety related issues could be addressed more effectively if Forest LEO's had authorization to enforce local State and county laws.

As was identified in this study a majority of the law enforcement and public safety related incidents result from substance abuse. An ability to directly enforce local laws on federal lands would result in improved public safety throughout the forest(s).

Equally important would be the authorization of local County officers to enforce federal regulations.

As the demands and complexities of the law enforcement job increases so too will the need for an increased cooperative effort. This can be facilitated by broadening the authority across jurisdictional lines.

An analysis of the strengths/weaknesses, legal and political ramifications of such an authority is needed.

#### **4. Improved LEMARS Reporting**

Lemars reports while useful do not provide managers with sufficient detail and analysis. This lack of high quality information may lead to uninformed, unaware or misinformed managers.

Methods to improve LEMARS reports including analysis of trends is needed. Data submitted through LEMARS should be reviewed to improve the quality of the information reported.

#### **5. Improved County Reporting/Records**

Cooperative efforts are needed to improve the useability of local law enforcement records. Local records were often sketchy as regards type and location of incidents. Improved reporting would assist the Forest Service in identifying trends and allow for more efficient law enforcement staffing in critical areas.

Identifying options for improved local law enforcement record keeping is needed. Development of common database attributes and shared access to records should be investigated.

